

**Fruit Check**  
**Isaiah 5:1-7**  
**August 16, 2026**

A young preacher saw a farmer out working in his field and being very concerned about his soul the preacher asked him, "Are you laboring in the vineyard of the Lord?" Not even looking up and continuing to work the farmer replied, "Naw, these are soybeans." "You don't understand," said the preacher. "Are you a Christian?" The farmer said, "Nope my name is Jones. You must be looking for Jim Christian who lives a mile from here." The preacher asked the farmer, "Are you lost?" "Naw! I've lived here all my life." "Are you prepared for the resurrection?" the frustrated preacher asked. This caught the farmer's attention and he asked, "When's it gonna be?" Thinking he was to something the preacher replied, "It could be today, tomorrow, or the next day." Taking a handkerchief from and wiping his brow, the farmer remarked, "Well, don't mention it to my wife. She don't get out much and she'll wanna go all three days." We're going to be laboring in the Lord's vineyard today, so please open your Bibles today to Isaiah 5.

We've gotten a bit off sequence again with our journey through Genesis and I thank Sister Diane for speaking last Sunday as Nancy and I were in Ohio for her aunt's funeral. Thank you for your prayers for our family. We'll get back to Jacob in September, but we'll be talking about a few other things until then. What's our theme for this year? Bearing fruit for Jesus. (Side to side). We kicked off the year with this and then shared the little stress reliever grape clusters to remind us of Jesus' command to bear His fruit. Our theme verse comes from John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." If you haven't yet memorized it, I encourage you to do so, but even more, I encourage you to live it out by bearing Jesus' fruit. Back in January, we spoke of many different varieties of spirit-fruit that we should be producing.

Here we are 8½ months in and we need to revisit our vineyard to see how our fruit production is coming along. Every grape grower visits his vineyard regularly to check its progress. To help us do this spiritually, please stand if you are able as we read from Isaiah 5:1 I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. 3 "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? 5 Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I

will take away its hedge, and it **will** be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it **will** be trampled. 6 I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." 7 The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

This parable from Isaiah is similar to one that Jesus told in Matthew 21 that we looked at earlier this year. There are some similarities, but also some differences. Let's look at both. Whenever we teach or preach the Bible, we often skip the first and most important step. Say Context. When and where did this happen? And to whom was it written? I'm glad you asked. Isaiah spoke this to the southern Kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, about 700 before Jesus was born. This was just 20 or so years after Assyria had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and threatened to do the same to Judah. Indeed, it would happen about 100 years after Isaiah prophesied this when Babylon would invade.

In the previous chapters, Isaiah warned his people, the Jews, about their arrogance and injustice and that judgment is coming. This song in the beginning of chapter 5 is a bit of a poetic summary. It is a song full of symbolism and prophecy and tells of a landowner who established a vineyard. Why do people plant vineyards? Say get grapes. Not for looks, not for fun, for fruit! He did everything he possibly could to ensure the vineyard would do exactly that.

He started out by digging up and turning the soil, not with a John Deere, but likely with a hand hoe, one swing at a time. As he did so, he dug up plenty of rocks. Say rocks. Israel is full of rocks. The Jews joke about how God's bag of rocks ripped a hole over the Promised Land. But the **soil** is fertile, we are told, which means it is not old eroded red clay. It is capable of growing healthy vines and good grapes. And it is situated on a hillside which is also ideal so that on cold spring nights, the heavy frosty air will fall on down the slope preventing it from settling and killing blooms like happened here this spring to most vineyards and orchards. The point is that the owner chose an ideal location in terms of soil and air in order to give the vineyard maximum opportunity to thrive and succeed and grow him much fruit.

The Archeological Study Bible says that "tending a vineyard required preparation and constant care. The first year was dedicated to clearing the land of its foliage and abundant rocks. The second year the farmer purchased and carefully planted the finest vines he could afford." Which is what Vs 2 says he did next. He planted the choicest vines. Say choicest. The Hebrew word implies the richest variety. Cabernet or Chardonnay. He scoured the internet for the best stock he could afford. When he found them, he bought them, and put them in the ground.

Then, it says, he built a watchtower. Say watchtower. Why would he do that? To hunt deer out of. No, to keep thieves out so the owner could get fruit when it grew. During the second year, the Study Bible says, the viticulturist would pile up the cleared rocks into fences or hedgerows and build occasional watchtowers to keep out intruders. Both four legged and two legged. He's protecting the vineyard He loves from being ravished, from being overrun, invaded, raped. Vs 7 says this vineyard is the "garden of his delight."

It also tells us he also cut a winepress. Say winepress. The winepress was to crush the grapes so the owner could get the wine. It's all about return on his investment for the one he loves. Cutting or digging the winepress was also usually done the second year before the first grapes could be expected and before it would be needed. Finally in the third year, if all went well, the fruit of all his labor was ready for harvest. Vineyards are not like squash that can be grown in a month or two. They are long-term investments of 30 years or more.

So the owner did everything he could possibly do. Vs 2, Then he looked for a crop of good grapes. Say good grapes. Sound familiar? Good fruit! What types of good fruit? You know- we talked about them earlier this year, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, salvation, sanctification, edification, glorification, righteousness, holiness, etc. The type of fruit God wants from us has not changed since the Garden of Eden. People ask, "What is God's will for me?" It is to produce this type of fruit. Whether you are a peasant or a president, a governor or a grubber. This is His desire. For Isaiah's Jews 2700 years ago, for the Disciples 2000 years ago and for Jesus' followers today. We are to bear Jesus' fruit!

Obviously the vineyard owner is God! In Isaiah's case, the vineyard is their nation of Judah and their city of Jerusalem as we are told in Vs 7. God did everything He could to ensure their productivity. But...vs 2 says, it yielded only bad fruit. Say bad fruit. Not just bad grapes, but bad fruit. The Hebrew means poison berries! Instead of grapevines, poison ivy! Remember we talked about the manchineel trees that produce little apples that can kill you! He's got a whole vineyard of them! Moses writes of this in Deut 32:32-33 "Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their clusters with bitterness. 33 Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras." Instead of fine wine, it's cobra venom! Arsenic! Jeremiah also spoke of the same thing in 2:21 where he says, "I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?" A rogue vine. A poison weed that took over. Invasive species like kudzu taking over the whole vineyard.

This is parable, so what is the poisonous fruit he's really talking about? Vs 7 gives us an idea. He looked for justice, but found bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries

of distress. These are puns in the Hebrew language since the word for justice, Mishpat, is very similar to the word for bloodshed, Mishpah. The Hebrew word for righteousness is very similar to the word for cries of distress. Someone has suggested the closest we could get would be like saying, “He sought equity but found iniquity, he sought a righteous nation, but found lamentation.” Instead of love, hatred was bursting out all over. Instead of peace, violence by the bushel. Instead of kindness, cruelty. Instead of good, evil. Instead of faithfulness, adultery, both marital and spiritual. Instead of self-control, unbridled sensuality and promiscuity, instead of holiness and worship, disrespect and blasphemy. Instead of humility, overweening pride. Turn all of the spirit-fruit varieties to their opposites and you can see what kind of poisonous berries sin produces. Instead of turning away from sin, they turned toward it. Instead of becoming more like Jesus, they became more like Satan.

That was Judah. How is it in your vineyard? In your bulletins, you have a mid-year fruit review. A fruit production assessment. How are we doing? When you have a minute later today, take a stroll through the vineyard of your life and prayerfully and seriously complete this. I don’t want to be producing bad fruit and I don’t want members of this congregation producing bad fruit. I want a vineyard whose vines are hanging full of the sweetest and best fruit for our Owner!

New believers, those of you who will be baptized today, this is the type of fruit God wants you to produce! And those of us who are older in the faith, we are to set good examples for them. St. Augustine once said, “Let me warn you, holy seedlings, (seedlings are the young sprouts, new believers) let me warn you, fresh plants in the field of the Lord, not to have it said of you what was said of the vineyard of the house of Israel: “I expected it to produce grapes, but it produced thorns.” Let the Lord find good bunches of grapes on you, seeing that He was Himself a bunch of grapes trodden in the winepress for you. Produce grapes; Live good lives.”

New believers, bear good fruit for Jesus! Mature believers, bear good fruit for Jesus! Many things can happen from the time of planting to harvest. One of the things that happened this spring, I already mentioned, is a late frost that killed 95% of the grape bloom throughout the valley. Sometimes we can have good intentions, web loom well!, We have good ideas, good desires, but then we get lazy or distracted with other things and the good fruit we meant to produce dies on the vine. The hard work Jesus did to clear our lives, to protect us from attack and to fertilize us with His Word comes to nothing as we waste it all on personal pleasure and selfish pursuits.

Matthew Henry said, “Good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough; there must be fruit, a good heart, **and** a good life..., thoughts **and** affections, words **and** actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard.” Words **and** actions. Thoughts **and** deeds. There’s nothing wrong with our

Vine. Jesus is the true Vine. The choicest Vine. But sometimes we as His shoots fail to produce.

In Isaiah's song of the vineyard, God says He will take away the hedge of protection He had built around her. Vs 5-6 I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. 6 I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." So what would you do if your vineyard failed to produce? Would you continue to fertilize it? Continue to irrigate it? Are you crazy? NO! Jerusalem's hedge was removed and in 586BC, the Babylonians invaded the vineyard, burning it to the ground and carrying off what was left of the once choicest vine.

Certainly, there's a sense in which this could be applied to the USA. God has given this country every advantage, every benefit. Fertile soil that has produced much. But with it, much bad fruit. Pornography, lust, adultery, homosexuality fornication, covetousness and greed, also known as consumerism and affluence; murder, drug and alcohol addiction, injustice, hatred, division, pride, abortion, etc. Multi-flora rose and honey locust. What more could He have done for us? Let us turn from our poison production and produce the good grapes of Jesus' righteousness!

But such is impossible without spiritual transformation. Make a tree good and its fruit will be good or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad. The only way to make a bad tree good is by the saving work of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. Which will never happen unless His followers share Jesus with others. Unless we open our mouths and tell others about Jesus so they can be saved, transformed to a good tree and start producing good fruit all over this nation.

So we must apply this parable on a church level. Both the church universal as well as each local body of believers. If Israel was the Garden of His delight, how much more the church for whom Christ died? We are the garden, the vineyard of His delight! And God has planted Antioch in the fertile soil of this valley and has fertilized us with rich resources and spiritual gifts. My prayer is that we might be producing much good fruit for Him. As shoots on His vine, it's up to us to take all the blessings He has given us and turn them into good fruit for His glory.

In Col 1:6 Paul tells the believers, "All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth." That is certainly my prayer and more importantly God's desire for our congregation! Oh may we not be an unfruitful vineyard full of multi-flora rose and locust thorns! May we never be guilty of using God's abundant blessings to produce poison berries instead of rich grapes, the fruit of the spirit.

Later in Isaiah 27, the prophet looks ahead to a new day in God's vineyard. Vs 2 says, "...Sing about a fruitful vineyard: 3 I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. ...6 In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit." What is he talking about? He's talking about the day when Jesus would come! And when, through His new life and Holy Spirit, His church will bud, blossom and fill all the earth with His good fruit! Wouldn't that be awesome? We may not be able to fill the whole world, but we can do our part in this corner of His vineyard. In Woodstock, in Shenandoah County. And if His churches do theirs in other parts of His vineyard all over VA and all over the US, and all over the globe, than Isaiah's prophecy will become a reality!

And finally, we must apply it on a personal level. If the vineyard of the church is to bear good fruit, it will be produced on individual shoots like you and me. Later in Col 1, Paul says in verse 10, And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." Review your fruit production today. Give God glory for all He has produced through you thus far. Identify areas of your shoot that need His help and surrender them to Him. Ask Him to spray the herbicide of His Word to kill persistent weeds of sin and to prune out harmful attitudes, and to enhance our fruit production. Most importantly, you can't bear His fruit if you're not a shoot on His vine. Bad vines cannot bear good fruit. So if you're not part of His vine, be grafted in and become one today by receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior.